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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rhetorical factors behind the success of Ernest Angley, non-denominational televangelist in Akron, Ohio. After describing the historical background of Angley and Grace Cathedral, the paper identifies some of the dominant beliefs that Angley espouses in his preaching. The paper then explains how these themes work in combination with other rhetorical strategies to gain Angley a large following. Following an introduction, the paper is in four sections: (1) Background of Angley and Grace Cathedral; (2) Angley's Prevailing Themes (faith healing, holy spirit baptism, and visitations from God); (3) Rhetorical Appeals (Angley's appearance and performance; humility and sincerity; Angley's appeal through love; hope, inspiration for the physically maimed; Angley as the ultimate legitimizer; music as entertainment); and (4) Conclusion. Eighty-three notes are included. (SR)

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His Speech Betrayeth Him:
The Healing Rhetoric of Ernest Angley,
Akron's Idiosyncratic Televangelist

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His Speech Betrayeth Him:
The Healing Rhetoric of Ernest Angley,
Akron's Idiosyncratic Televangelist

They come in droves. Some crave spiritual nourishment. Others seek a physical healing. But whatever their need, each Friday evening, people of all ages scurry excitedly into the three-thousand-seat auditorium of Grace Cathedral in Akron, Ohio. They flock together where Ernest Angley, dynamic minister and founder of the non-denominational church, carefully orchestrates his weekly miracle service.

During a typical Friday evening gathering, after his audience has been solicited for money some two or three times for one project or another, Angley begins a desultory sermon, which lasts for nearly an hour. Then comes the part in his service for which many, if not most, people attend. Angley invites those who have come "for the first time," "who [have] traveled a long distance" or who have come from "another state" to form a line so that he might lay his hands on them to be healed. "Come right on," he boasts. "Whatever it is, God will heal." One by one, as people crowd to the stage, Angley lays his hands on those who reportedly have tumors on their lungs, lumps in their breasts, suicidal tendencies and other emotional problems, inner ear trouble, and smoking and drinking habits, to name a few. "Wilt though be made whole?" Angley frequently asks a willing subject? "Loose her in the name of the Lord," he screams. Then he admonishes the individual, "Go and get well." Angley can also be

heard shouting, "Loose her thou foul devil and come out of her," or "Heeeyul! Heeeyul! Heeeeeeeyul! dear Jesus," in which case the audience might erupted in applause.[1]

Having personally witnessed Angley during one of these Friday evening performances, it is clear to this writer that Angley is popular among those who attend. He boasts, "We've had as high as fifteen countries and twenty-eight states just in one service. And they come from all over." Angley proudly proclaims that one woman even "flew in from Russia to get her miracle and had to go back."[2] Visiting one of these services himself prompted James Randi to write in his book The Faith Healers that, to his parishioners, Angley is "a God-inspired preacher." "We found that most of those in attendance at the church," suggests Randi, "were accustomed to being there every Friday night. It was their 'night out' in very much the way other folks go to the drive-in movie or the bowling alley once a week."[3]

In addition to his Friday night followers, Angley has also amassed a large gathering of television viewers. While he is not as well known as some televangelists, he is, nonetheless, a national figure, appearing in approximately twenty-nine markets with 37,000 households watching him each week.[4] According to Angley (during the Friday night this author attended his assembly) he is also "reaching into 139 countries," had a total television audience of over one million for the month of January, 1988, and was viewed by 358,000 households during the week of February 7, 1988.[5] Angley's own organization reports that Stern

magazine, billed as one of the largest in Europe, once referred to him as the United States' "super star" of religion and that the American people consider him to be "the most gifted TV preacher in the land."[6] While this description might be sensationalized by Angley's organization, there can be no doubt that thousands of people revere him. Therefore, the question to be addressed in this paper is this: What rhetorical factors cause Angley to be so successful? Or as one friend of this author asked, "So what's his appeal?" In attempting to answer this inquiry, after discussing some historical background of Angley and Grace Cathedral, I shall attempt to identify some of the dominant beliefs that he espouses in his preaching. Then I shall attempt to explain how these themes work in combination with other rhetorical strategies to gain Angley a large following.

I. Background of Angley and Grace Cathedral

Ernest Angley was born into a Baptist family in Mooresville, North Carolina, in 1922. One of seven children whose father was a poor textile worker, Angley spent two years at Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee, "mostly on faith." "I didn't have any money," he explains. While in school there, he met his future wife Esther Lee Sikes, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William N. Sikes, a "railroad man" from Wimauma, Florida, where Esther was born. They were married in November of 1943, the same year Angley was licensed to preach.[7]

Angley actually began part-time preaching, however, shortly after his conversion at age eighteen. Prior to coming to Akron, he and "Angel," as he affectionately called his wife, traveled just over ten years around the United States and the Caribbean, holding revivals in auditoriums and tents. "Angel" played the organ and her husband preached. In June of 1954, they rolled into Akron with two semi-trailers, a large tent, and an air-conditioned house trailer. The tent was erected on a hill near the present site of Grace Cathedral and was called the Temple of Healing Stripes, a name inspired by Isaiah 53:5.[8] When it was dismantled for the winter, Angley moved the congregation that he had acquired into the Old Liberty Theatre on West Market Street in downtown Akron. There they met until the Spring of 1955, when they built a wooden-frame structure on twenty acres of land on Canton Road in southeast Akron. Before purchasing this land, Angley waved a pocket-size Bible over it, which he carried with him on business deals, to signify he was claiming it for the Lord. The newly erected wooden building, also known as the Temple of Healing Stripes, was constructed through volunteer labor and offerings. In 1957, work began on a newer, larger building that cost 1.3 million dollars to accommodate a three-thousand-member congregation. It was completed in April of 1958 and was given its present name--Grace Cathedral.[9]

II. Angley's Prevailing Themes

Faith Healing

Ernest Angley claims to be endowed with a special gift for bringing deliverance to the sick. However, he frequently makes it clear to his audience that it is God who does the healing, not himself.[10] Sounding much like Oral Roberts, he suggests, "Friend, man is a flimsy substitute for God. We must, above all, look to our God. Remember, man cannot heal; God is the healer." Angley frequently advertises, "Absolutely all of the credit and honor for healing is given to God."[11] Additionally, Angley's organization makes it clear that he "does not claim to be a faith healer" at all, but merely "a witness of the marvelous healing power of Christ."[12] Angley frequently remarks to his audiences, "I am not a healer. I do not claim to be [one]."[13]

In spite of the fact that he does not claim to be the healer, Angley, nonetheless, suggests that faith is necessary for one to be healed. For example, he argues that "nothing can keep you from being healed if you are willing to act whole-heartedly on the Word. There is no room for 'if's,' 'might's' or 'hopeso's.'"[14] Furthermore, he relates how many people come into his healing lines at his crusades and church services "shaking with fear because they are afraid they do not have faith to be healed." "If you can look up into the face of God and say, 'Lord, I believe every chapter, every verse, every word.'" suggests Angley, "then, you have enough faith to be healed of any affliction or disease." If one does not have faith, however, he

or she cannot be healed. Citing Romans 10:17, Angley suggests that a person obtains faith by reading and meditating on the Word of God.[15]

Angley further contends that even after recovering from a disease, one can lose his or her health if that person loses faith in God. "Anything obtained through faith can be lost through doubt," he suggests. "Anything you get from God through obedience can be lost through disobedience." In other words, backsliders can expect to lose their miracle.[16]

Ernest Angley suggests that a miracle occurs "when God sets aside the laws of nature and answers prayer. . . ."[17] According to his own definition, the logical conclusion is that when the laws of nature have not been set aside, no miracle has occurred. Ironically, however, Angley never demonstrates in his miracle services how the laws of nature have been superseded by the supernatural. Instead he assumes that individuals will believe that any healing is a supernatural occurrence if they first pray to be healed.

Of all of the "miracles" that occurred in the Friday night service attended by this writer, not one visibly demonstrated a setting aside of the laws of nature. If anything, the laws of nature continued to operate. That is, headaches, backaches, and emotional problems--those identified in Angley's Friday evening assembly--frequently heal by themselves. Even when they do not, they can be treated medically and will most likely go away in time.[18] In both cases, the laws of nature continue to operate.

Nevertheless, Angley never demonstrates how the laws of nature have been set aside.

On one occasion during the Friday night service attended by this author, Angley told one woman to "Go and get well."[19] Similarly, in one of his televised sermons, after praying for the sick, he once told his audience, "Let that power work in your body now. Let it work and you watch all improvements daily and get well."[20] In one of his books, Angley informs his readers that healing "is not always apparent at first." "Although it may be a few days before you see the outward results," he suggests, "healing will start working in your body the moment hands are laid on you." He goes on to point out that symptoms of a disease "may recur after you are prayed for." However, a person should not let those symptoms "cause you to doubt what God has done for you."[21] In other words, Angley seems to be saying, "believe that the laws of nature have been set aside and that you have received a miracle, in spite of the fact that your body is telling you otherwise." It appears that Angley is determined to attribute whatever healing occurs in a person to something supernatural, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. Sadly, despite the fact that Angley never empirically demonstrates how the healing laws of nature have been set aside, people continue to believe that his prayers and laying on of hands will lead to their supernatural healings. And herein lies the problem. While Angley may be psychologically helping some individuals, the potential to harm, if not kill, others is great. Telling

individuals in his services that they are healed might prompt some unsuspecting person to throw away badly needed medicine or other medial aids. Citing two philosophy professors from a midwestern university, Randi suggests:

> If Angley were only in the entertainment business, the matter could be left there. But the remaining possibility is of a more serious nature--that he is taking money under false pretenses by claiming to do something that he doesn't do and cannot do--heal the sick.[22]

Like other faith healers, Angley frequently evokes scriptures to support his contention that God heals people supernaturally of their infirmities. One of his favorite passages is Isaiah 53:5, which suggests in part, "With his stripes we are healed." Angley believes that "salvation of the Old Rugged Cross, because of a man called Jesus," suggests Angley, "we can reach God directly today for salvation, for healing."[23]

Angley also uses Exodus 15:26 ("I am the Lord that healeth thee") to support the idea that God supernaturally heals in a physical sense. "If you have tried, to no avail, every cure for your disease that man offers, now try God! His healing is promised to you in His Word," he suggests.[24]

In addition, Angley draws heavily on Matthew 18:19 to demonstrate the power of prayer in healing. He remarks, "The Bible says in Matt. 18:19, 'That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.'" Hence, he encourages, "If there is something special you would like me to

pray with you about--a special problem or need--write to me and I will pray over your requests."[25]

Ernest Angley preaches that individuals need "a point of contact" through which to release their faith. At the close of all of his televised sermons, he asks those who are sick at home to place their hands on the television "as a point of contact" in order to receive their miracle.[26] He also advertises "blest cloths" that his ministry sends to people as a point of contact. "Many have been healed by this method. Read about its use in Acts 19:11-12," he suggests.[27] To justify this practice, Angley explains how individuals in the apostle Paul's day "were healed simply by faith in the cloths Paul had anointed with miracle power. The cloths didn't heal, they were a point of contact people used to release their faith so they could accept miracles."[28]

In fact, practically anything will serve as a point of contact for Angley, no matter how bizarre it might sound. For instance, in a letter advertising February 15, 1988, as "Mountain Day," Angley suggested to his readers that they tear off the upper left-hand corner of the page and keep it "as a special point of contact" when "we will pray one for another and ask God to grant each request."[29] Furthermore, he remarks that in the New Testatment, aprons, handkerchiefs, oil, "the laying on of hands," and even shadows and mud "were points of contact for deliverance of the sick." Although points of contact are

important and can include almost anything, a person still needs faith to be healed, according to Angley.[30]

Holy Spirit Baptism

No discussion of Ernest Angley would be complete without reference to his teaching on Holy Ghost baptism. When baptism by the Spirit occurs, he suggests, people feel its "warmth" "like soothing oil pouring over" them. "Now it's gushing forth in a mighty volcano of power."[31] They can then expect to speak "with other tongues" as evidence that they have received this miraculous immersion.[32]

Drawing on passages such as Acts 8:15-17 and Acts 19:2-6, Angley teaches that Holy Ghost baptism is "not automatically received when one receives salvation." He also suggests that baptism by the Spirit "is something apart from water baptism, that after receiving Jesus into your heart as your Savior, there is yet more--the baptism in the Holy Ghost." According to Angley, although salvation is "vital," in that it comes before Holy Spirit baptism, one should be willing "to yield totally" to the "fire of the Spirit."[33] If people are not willing to "yield enough to receive the baptism in the Spirit," they are not "yielding enough to be changed . . . when Jesus comes in midair to take His bride home."[34]

Angley suggests that baptism in the Holy Spirit is necessary for people today for a number of reasons. First, and paradoxically, the Holy Spirit convicts one of his or her sins. Angley asks, "do you realize that through the Holy Spirit that

you came to Jesus, that you could not have come to him unless you were drawn by the Spirit?" Unless the Holy Spirit brings individuals "into the reality that [they] were lost and undone and a fit subject for hell and that [they] were on [their] way to eternal damnation to be shut away from God as the eternal ages roll," individuals could not be saved.[35] Second, Angley suggests, "the fire of the Holy Spirit burns out of us that which is unlike our Master until we are in one mind and one accord, until we come into the unity of His Spirit and love, until we hear the great commission as the early church heard it." Simply put, Holy Spirit baptism helps purify and fine-tune a Christian. Third, baptism in the Holy Spirit gives an individual courage to overcome the obstacles of life and proclaim the gospel "as the early church evangelized their known world." Finally, the Holy Spirit gives "mountains of miracles in this final hour." In other words, a person can expect to perform and receive miracles as a result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit on humankind. Therefore, suggests Angley, Christians can pray, "Father, rain it down! Father, send the miracle power, the power of the Holy Ghost!"[36] In short, although "salvation alone" will take people to heaven after death, "salvation alone" will not take them "into the deepness and greatness of God" while they are on the earth. Only the baptism in the Holy Spirit can do that.[37]

Visitations from God

In addition to the above themes, Angley teaches that God occasionally speaks and appears to him. "Visions are not

imagination," he suggests. "[T]he objects in them appear as they would in life. God's contacts are definite . . . changing you in a way that is unforgettable." Angley reveals that his first visitation came when he was only seven, when God showed him millions of stars and told him that this would be the number of souls he would eventually lead to Christ. He recalls, "I was on my bed, my head buried in the pillow, and the bed began to spin around and around until I was out in space under the stars. Stars were everywhere; it was a fantastic experience that lingered with me through the years."[38]

Shortly after his conversion at age eighteen, the Lord allegedly appeared to him again to anoint him to preach. "The annointing [sic] of the Lord came upon me and I just started preaching," he recounts. "I had been saved for about five weeks when the preacher in my church asked me to talk. I was going to read a bit from the Scriptures and sit down. That was all." Then, something suddenly happened. According to Angley, "[T]he power of the Lord came into me and I went into a Cloud of Glory. There was a brilliant light all around me."[39] He recounts how when he first started to preach, "I would be caught up in the glory of the Lord so much that the faces in the audience would seem to swim before my eyes. . . ."[40]

Angley relates how in 1945, "the Lord came to me one night and healed me" of a stomack ulcer. He recalls how the Lord appeared in a blinding light. There Christ told him "that I was going to go on a long fast and that He would give me his power of

healing others and that I was to carry the ministry of healing to the multitudes." Suggesting that the Lord sometimes appears to him while he is on stage preaching at Grace Cathedral, Angley says, "I can see all of him and he looks very much like many paintings of Jesus."[41]

In 1970, shortly before buring his wife "Angel," Angley relates how God appeared to him again. "The Lord spoke to me in a divine visitation before I buried her, and explained it all to me; her going was planned even before we were married. God knew exactly when He was going to take her." Angley further relates, "He explained to me a future with no Angel. He showed me that together we had won a multitude of souls; and the rest of the souls . . . would have to be won without her." "He also told me that by His taking her when He did, she would bring more souls into His kingdom than had He left her with me," suggests Angley.[42]

One of Angley's most impressive "visitations" from God, however, supposedly occurred in a prison cell in Munich, Germany, on July 11, 1984. Jailed by the Munich authorities for practicing medicine without a license, among other charges, after several hours under house arrest in his hotel room, Angley was locked in a "narrow cell" for "eight-and-a-half hours." "But in that foul depressing place," he suggests, "the Spirit of God was with me; the cell filled with the glory of God." Remembering that in 1954 "Jesus had told me . . . that I would wear His shoes," Angley recounts how "something special was to happen in

that cell." In dramatic fashion, he relates how the "light of God--a most beautiful sight--shone down from heaven on me, thrilling me as the Holy Ghost took me over." God "began to sing through me--the same song He had sung through me when I was eighteen as the Lord was calling me to preach." After singing "in another tongue and then in English," Angley "began to go into visions, one after another." He relates how the cross of Christ would appear to him "in liquid fire." Then it would appear "in royal blue--miracle power." Sometimes it would appear to be "both the cross of miracle power and healing power." He discloses, "The Lord was just living with me, and I had the strength of many men even after all those hours I'd been up! Every part of me was anointed, my bones, my flesh."[43]

But the Lord apparently was not through speaking to Angley in Munich. On July 12, a hail storm rained down on the city, causing extensive damage to buildings, automobiles, and airplanes. He relates how God told him that this was going to occur as punishment for his imprisonment. "God got us out of there, and then He rained judgment just like He promised," suggests Angley. "God said He sent it, and He'd take full credit."[44]

After the Munich incident, God allegedly appeared to Angley again, telling him to sue the city. "Although I told people right after my release that I didn't think I would sue, when God let me know He wanted the lawsuits, I moved on it." "Man may say 'forgive,' but God sent judgment. God meant business; God told

me to sue. "[W]ho am I to withstand God?" asks Angley.[45] Eventually the Munich incident ended in Angley paying 25,000 marks of his 40,000 mark bond to the city of Munich and 5,000 marks to the Salvation Army of Munich--the charity of Angley's choice.[46]

III. Rhetorical Appeals

Angley's Appearance and Performance

One of the first things that one notices about Ernest Angley is his appearance. Because of his looks, he has been the subject of frequent parodies.[47] Angley is a portly man about five feet, eight inches tall. Haferd suggests that, with his stoop shoulders, he reminds one of Richard Nixon. Occasionally, she suggests, he looks like a "peeved Richard Simmons."[48] Commenting on his stage presence, Randi confesses, "To me he is a ludicrous figure" but to his parishioners, "he is a God-inspired preacher."[49]

Angley frequently dresses conservatively, although in the spring and summer he regularly wears white and light-colored suits. His appearance is always neat, however. The Friday night this writer visited Grace Cathedral, Angley was wearing a charcoal-colored suit with a light blue shirt and a pink, silk tie accompanied by a matching silk handkerchief protruding from his upper, coat pocket. Square cufflinks, an indistinguishable watchband, and a gold wedding ring that he still wears periodically reflected the bright ceiling lights, as did his immaculately polished black shoes. Except for the shirt collar

that flared outward at the ends, Angley's atire could easily have been mistaken for something out of GQ magazine.[50]

Angley's dress is always overshadowed by his style of preaching, however. Speaking with a tense, nasal twang, he frequently darts to the right or to the left of the podium with his body. His hands are continually in motion. The sudden upward jerks of his head reveal a gleam in his eyes as he constantly squinches his eyebrows and wrinkles his forehead, changing his facial expressions.[51]

Neuendorf and Ableman suggest that, second only to James Robinson, Ernest Angley had the greatest amount of facial intensity of all preachers in their study of fourteen popular televangelists.[52] Speaking, by and large, in a conversational tone, occasionally Angley yells at the top of his voice to emphasize the seriousness of a point. Neuendorf and Ableman point out that Angley's "primary communication type" is "conversational." In other words, "During his sermon, Angley is more likely to assume a conversational tone than preach. . . ." Despite this, however, he was still rated the fourth highest televangelist in vocal intensity and the third highest televangelist in overall intensity among the fourteen ministers studied.[53]

In a word, Ernest Angley is entertaining. No doubt, this contributes to his overall appeal. Despite any negative points that one might make about his style and delivery, these probably in no way impede his message to his parishoners. In his book

Criticism of Oral Rhetoric, Carroll Arnold points out that, generally, "visible action does not harm [a speaker's] communication" and that "certain deficiencies in the audible code, though listeners consider them unpleasant, do not affect comprehension." The conclusion that one should draw from this, suggests Arnold, is not that speakers should not strive for excellency in delivery but that "in the whole complex of content, style, arrangement, and delivery no one presentational element . . . is likely to affect the outcome significantly." He goes on to suggest that "the nonverbal aspects of speaking will probably affect listeners' responses very little unless verbal and nonverbal behaviors seem inconsistent or mutually reinforcing to an unusual degree."[54]

It is difficult to judge in every case what effect Angley's style and delivery have on those observing him. To some, like James Randi, Angley is indeed "a ludicrous figure." Randi describes Angley's overall performance as resembling a "circus."[55] For others, though, especially for his regular viewers and parishoners, Angley's idiosyncratic style and delivery merely serve to reinforce his message. Even one unbiased viewer, after watching Angley on television, commented, "He spoke in a fairly monotone voice. But I enjoyed the accent and drawn-out words."[56] Because of his uniqueness as an orator, Ernest Angley probably continues to appeal to audiences who either flock to Grace Cathedral for the weekend or tune in to his weekly and daily television programs. Lewis suggests that "While

the accents and strange linguistic behavior of . . . Ernest Angley . . . may be the basis for derisive commentary and caricature by critics, this 'strange' aura may be an attraction for the fanatical follower."[57]

Humility and Sincerity: Cornerstones of Appeal

Probably one of Ernest Angley's most attractive features to his followers is his humility, which, ironically, he constantly advertises. For example, prior to the beginning of his healing services, Angley usually says, "I sanctify the Lord God. I declare, oh God, that miracles and the healings are yours. Thou knowest, oh God, that I never take any of the honor. I never claim any of the glory. I am just a weakness to your greatness." In fact, throughout his services, it is not uncommon for Angley to remind his audience, "It is God's power that cures. It is not one thing that I can do. I am just a vessel of clay that He uses."[58] Elsewhere, Angley suggests, "I am not a healer; Jesus is the healer. I am not a savior; Jesus is the Savior. He is all in all. By myself I am nothing. I am just an instrument of clay that God has chosen. . . ."[59]

Once when asked by Cleveland television personality Fred Griffith if he taylored his messages to his various constituencies, Angley responded, "No! No! No! I carry the message of Jesus. This is the Jesus ministry. And everything is centered around Jesus, not around Ernest Angley. God forbid. Jesus is the one." Angley emphatically asserted, "I'm not trying to build Ernest Angley. I'm working on building His [Christ's]

kingdom.[60] Eugene White suggests that with "increased confidence acquired by successful experience," speakers often "develop exalted opinions of themselves." White also suggests that when such conceit is noticed by one's audience, it irritates them. "Modesty, is an indispensable asset in interpersonal relations," he advises. Therefore, he warns speakers against "parading" their accomplishments before their audiences.[61] Apparently, Ernest Angley recognizes this and strives to convey his modesty to his hearers, lest they become disillusioned with his success.

In addition to humility, Angley also leaves one with the impression that he is sincere about what he is doing. Even James Randi in his stinging attack on faith healers admits this much.[62] When asked by Fred Griffith why fundamentalists--individuals who normally de-emphasize sophistication and intellect--are the primary users of up-to-date, high-tech communication equipment, Angley responded that, while he could not speak for others, he could speak for himself: "I'm a born evangelist. And I evangelize people. And I have this message burning in my heart. And I want to tell everybody." In the same interview, Angley disclosed how he never had much money as a boy. This, he assured those watching, "conditioned me and prepared me for the ministry." "When I think of money, he says, "I think of helping people. I think of souls, and I love to feed the starving, cloth the naked. And I love to let them know that Jesus loves them."[63] Since Angley constantly makes comments like these, it is difficult for one to think of him as anything other than sincere.

Even in his healing lines, Angley exudes the image of a sincere man of God. In the Friday night service attended by this author, for example, when a couple brought their three-year-old son to Angley to be healed of hyperactivity, Angley's yelling "Loose him!" caused the child to cry. In an attempt to calm the boy, Angley responded in a caring, fatherly voice, "Honey, Jesus loves you. And I wouldn't hurt you. No. I'm your buddy. I'm your buddy . . . . Oh no, don't you cry now."[64] Shortly, the child ceased crying. The timing of his response and tone of his voice suggested to this author that Angley's concern for the boy was sincere. After watching one of Angley's programs, one viewer suggested that he presented the image of "a friendly, hardworking preacher who is very concerned about his congregation." Continuing she reported, "He . . . presented a fatherly image. He tried to make the impression that he was a father or a knowledgeable big brother guiding his family to salvation."[65]

Former President Harry Truman once remarked that "the public is quick to detect and reject the charlatan and the demagogue. It may be deceived for a brief period, but not for long." Conferring with Truman, Eugene White suggests that even a hint of insincerity may result in failure for the speakers.[66] If this be true, it is doubtful that Angley's listeners view him as an insincere man, for even today his Akron ministry continues to flourish as it has through its nearly thirty-six years of existence. Despite his idiosyncracies, Angley is liked by his constituency because he appears to be genuinely concerned for

their well being. In addition, he endears himself by giving God the credit for the "miracles" reported in his services. Honesty and sincerity, therefore, go a long way in bolstering his appeal.

Angley's Appeal through Love

Closely related to sincerity is the love that Angley shows toward his followers. This, too, helps attract individuals to his ministry. For example, Angley frequently discloses in his letters to his constituency, "You are loved very, very much by this ministry."[67]

Martha Templeton of Barberton, Ohio, relates how she was addicted to alcohol and drugs before she started attending the services at Grace Cathedral. There, she contends, she met many loving people. She recounts how she had already been blessed by watching Angley on television. "I started attending the services at Grace Cathedral and through all the prayers of many loving people--people who had been praying for me for a long time--God healed my mind, my soul and my body." "Had Reverend Angley not been on television . . . I fear what would have happened to me," she discloses. "[God] has brought me into the knowledge of His love through the ministry at Grace Cathedral," she adds. "This is what I needed, the reality of God's love, the love that filled the void of loneliness. . . ."[68]

When preaching from the pulpit at Grace Cathedral, Angley is very explicit to his television audiences that he loves them. "We love you," he boasts, "That's the reason we come to you week after week . . . to be a blessing to you." Jesus' number one

mission for all nations is "really close to my heart," says Angley. "We're trying to reach everybody we can." In closing, he assures his viewers, "We love you. And God loves you. I pray for you partners day after day."[69]

Even in the literature that he sends to those who request it, Angley makes a concerted effort to emphasize love. He suggests, for instance, "Through the power of the Cross, your God will move. He loves you; He cares for you. He'll hold you close, breathe upon you and give you strength."[70] Additionally he urges those who "wake in the mornings feeling unloved, uncared for" to turn to God. "You are precious in [God's] sight," suggests Angley. "God honors and treasures the obedient children of God, but the lukewarm will be spewed into great tribulation."[71]

This type of message would appeal to those individuals who have fallen on hard times--the drug addicts, the alcoholics, the poor, and the socially oppressed. Angley is merely filling the void of loneliness and desperation when he tells his viewers how much he loves them. Thus, when love is coupled with Angley's messages about miracles and Holy Spirit baptism, readers or viewers soon believe that their lives can be improved by becoming Christians in general and members of Angely's ministry in particular.

Hope: Inspiration for the Physically Maimed

For much the same reason that many people find his love appealing, others find hope in Angley's preaching, especially

those who are physically afflicted. In the Friday night service attended by this writer, Angley exuded hope to the handicapped. After pointing out that Christ was always busy healing people, he responded, "he is the healing Christ. . . . And you know He performs miracles. You know he does. You know that he heals the lame. He is the healing Christ." At one point, Angley addressed Christ in prayer, "Those who have been crippled in accidents, you can make them whole, those who have been paralyzed. . . . Heal that cancer patient. Heeeyul! Heeeyul! Heeeeeeeyul! dear Jesus." Prior to forming his healing line, Angley urged the audience, "Come right on. Whatever it is, God will heal."[72]

Whenever individuals have exhausted their options for recovery as some individuals in Angley's healing lines have, the only thing left is for them to turn to Angley who teaches that God will heal them miraculously. Angley, for example, suggested to one woman who had received no cure after visiting medical authorities, "We believe in good doctors, but when the doctors have done all they can--Loose her!--in the name of Jesus." Simply put, Angley offers hope when all other hope is gone. Or as a friend who accompanied this writer to Angley's Friday night miracle service commented, "Most people there were desperate to solve their problems."[73] Thus, when all hope is gone, Angley allegedly provides people with another option--miraculous, divine healing. This is only one of the many reasons why he is a popular figure.

Angley as the Ultimate Legitimizer

Overcoming the vicissitudes of life help to legitimize one's existence. Hence, Angley validates his beliefs and practices by describing to his audience the terrible shape his life was in before God wrought miracles on him. This rhetorical device, whether used consciously or unconsciously, can be a powerful force in persuading others to accept one's position.

Since one of Angley's missions is to win souls to Christ, he himself constantly reminds his listeners of his own positive conversion experience in hope that they, too, might be compelled to accept Christ. "When I was eighteen, the Lord saved me," he relates.[74] "I shall remember forever that night in my teens when I took Jesus home with me. Never have I let Him go. It was the greatest night of my life! I wanted to tell the whole world: 'I met the Master! I'm cleansed, saved, born again! I've been to Calvary!"[75] Angley recounts how upon leaving the alter the night of his conversion, he left on a different road ("the love road" of Christ) than the one on which he came.[76] "I knew that night I'd never be the same. I had found the king of my life and for my life."[77]

Perhaps Angley's conversion would never have occurred if he had not had others around him to set the example, he hints. "Through my Dad's life, my Mom's life, my two oldest sisters, I saw the star shining bright to show me the way." He discloses, "As a little boy I'd go in and sit there and listen" to "good Sunday school teachers filled with the Spirit of God." "And you

know a lot of saints of God kept that star shining bright for me to see." He further suggests how the Lord choose him. "He wanted me, that little ol' boy called Ernest Angley. . . . He wanted me so he could direct my paths and make them plain paths that would lead to heaven."[78] These kinds of testimonies demonstrate that not only does Angley believe that his message about salvation is valid but that God himself personally called him to the ministry. In other words, God has put his stamp of approval on Angley. The logic is, "If what Angley says is true (and to his listeners there is no reason to believe it is not), then God must have personally chosen Angley for his ministry."

In addition to the testimonies surrounding his conversion, Angley legitimizes his teachings on miracles through personal examples. For instance, beside relaying the fact that God cured him of an ulcerated stomach, Angley reveals how God also healed him of a bone disease. "I would have probably just had one leg today, just one. The other one would have been artificial had it not been for the Lord," he contends. Angely describes the "disease that almost destroyed me as a child" as an "awful pain." "I can never put in words what I went through with it. Nobody will ever know because I've never been able to describe it." "All I could come up with," offers Angley, "is just like some wild animal of some kind gnawing on the bone of my leg, that the flesh was gone and it was just gnawing, gnawing on the bone."

His affliction lasted for "a long period of time." "My mother would sleep with me and my mother would pray into the wee

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hours of the morning," he remembers. Then after many nights of prayer, "King Jesus came and made me whole, made me well." "I knew he could heal. I didn't doubt his healing power. I knew it. I had a good leg," he relates.[79]

Angley's tales of personal healings serve to persuade his audience to believe that the messages about the miraculous that he preaches are true, and should, therefore, be accepted. Hence, one does not have to wonder why it is that Angley has such a large turnout for his Friday night miracle services. People from all across the country and Canada come expecting to receive their miracle, just as Angley has received his. In effect, Angley is the ultimate legitimizer of miracles, as well as salvation.

In addition to personal testimonies about healing, Angley referred to the hailstorm that struck Munich, Germany, the day after his arrest, as God's wrath being poured out upon an ungodly city. In his book Cell 15, which recounts his experience in Munich, Angley relates that God said, "When I shined my light upon my son in the cell, I was moved with anger. . . . I raised my hand of judgement against the evil that was shown my servant that I sent to Munich. I, the Lord thy God, did it." Angley further suggests that the Lord said, "I want the inhabitants of the earth to know I take full responsibility for the calamity in Munich. I, the Lord thy God, did it."[80] Through those types of tesimonies, two things are operating. First, Angley implicitly claims that God approves of him as a "servant" since God allegedly sent the storm to punish those who withstood him.

Second, the Munich hailstorm serves as further evidence to the true believer that God miraculously dwells in the affairs of humans, and thus serves to validate further Angley's themes about the miraculous.

In addition to personal testimonies surrounding his salvation and miracles, a third factor that legitimizes Angley as a man of God is his rise from poverty. Angley recounts, "God prepared me for the hard places, I grew up fast in a big family, in a poor home where I had to dig, work and fight for everything I got. I learned not to accept defeat, not to be overcome by discouragement," He discloses how, as a boy, he had "but one hand-me-down sweater to wear as I walked, shaking and chilled to the bone, over a mile to school in the winter." "I had forgotten about that sweater," says Angley, "until the Lord took me back to my boyhood, showing how He had gotten me ready for His work." According to Angley, the Lord "was getting me ready for a ministry on which I would never turn back, never say no to God or find a task too hard." He suggests how being "accustomed to battles [and] hardships and being in want . . . toughened me."[81]

Much like Oral Roberts, Angley's life is a rags-to-riches story.[82] Grace Cathedral, with its elaborate decorations, serves to remind one of his success. Because God was allegedly preparing him for the ministry through poverty, and since Angley is no longer poor, one naturally might think that God has anointed Angley for the ministry. In other words, God has blessed Angley with wealth to confirm him as a servant of God.

Thus, when one visits Grace Cathedral with its plush interior or when one sees a well-groomed, finely clad man stroll onto the stage, it becomes difficult for Angley's constituency to believe that God has not called him to preach.

Music as Entertainment

As is the case with other televangelists, Angley knows the drawing power of a good musical performance. Each television sermon is preceeded by a very entertaining song, sung either by "The Ninety-Nine Club Singers" or by "The Ernest Angley Singers," his men's quartet. Those who visit Grace Cathedral on a Friday night will experience even more music. Not only will they hear two or three songs either by "The Ernest Angley Singers" or "The Ninety-Nine Club Singers," but they will also be entertained with a few songs by the church choir. Some of these songs contain solos, making them even more entertaining.[83] In short, music helps to draw people not only to Angley's television program but also to his Friday night services at Grace Cathedral.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to address the question of Ernest Angely's appeal. After discussing relevant background information about Angley and his church, I have attempted to delineate the major themes he preaches. By and large, they include faith healing, Holy Spirit baptism, and visitations from God. In addition to these issues, I have attempted to suggest what rhetorical factors Angley either consciously or unconsciously employs in his preaching. Beside the fact that he

is entertaining to watch due, in part, to his idiosyncratic style and delivery, his perishoners probably see him as a humble and sincere man of God's anointing who offers love and hope to the downtrodden. Angley's own experiences in overcoming life's hardships also contribute to his persuasible appeal because they portray him as the ultimate legitimizer of his teachings. The musical performances that preceed his sermons further attract followers.

Although his idiosyncratic style in the pulpit may be humorous to outsiders, Angley's followers continue to flock to his weekend services and continue to watch him via television. Despite the fact that his popularity is not as great as other televangelists, Angley is, nonetheless, a national and international figure that has captured the hearts of thousands of people, most of whom probably look to him to help them repair their broken or unhappy lives. Any serious discussion of televangelism, then, would be incomplete if it did not include Akron's thirty-five-year, pentecostal resident.

Notes

1. Tape-recorded observation by the author who attended Grace Cathedral, 19 Feb. 1988. Hereafter all quotations taken from the author's personal experience will be referred to merely as "Personal observation."

2. Ernest Angley, interview with Fred Griffith, The Morning Exchange, WEWS Television, Cleveland, 1 March 1988.

3. James Randi, The Faith Healers (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1987) 238.

4. Statistics courtesy of Arbitron, May 1987.

5. Personal observation.

6. Ernest Angley, Cell 15: The Imprisonment of Ernest Angley (Akron Ohio: 1984) addendum, xiv-xv, hereafter referred to as Cell 15.

7. John de Groot, "In Rev. Angley's Gloryland: Miracles 4 Times a Week," The [Akron] Beacon Journal 5 June 1966, G-4. "'Angel' of Grace Cathedral Dies," The [Akron] Beacon Journal 29 Dec. 1970, n.pag. See also the biographical sketch of Angley given to interested individuals by Ernest Angley's ministry; hereafter referred to merely as "Biographical Sketch."

8. Isaiah 53:5 suggests, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." King James Version.

9. de Groot G-4. Laura Haferd, Religion Writer for The [Akron] Beacon Journal, personal interview, 19 Feb. 1988. See also Angley's interview with Fred Griffith.

10. Ernest Angley, Confidence (Akron, Ohio: Winston Press, 1988) 24.

11. Ernest Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick (Akron, Ohio: Winston Press, 1983) 29. Also see back cover.

12. Ernest Angley, Lukewarm Christians (Akron, Ohio: Winston Press, 1987) 24.

13. Personal observation.

14. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 15.

15. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 36-37, 39.

16. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 56.

17. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 25.

18. Even Angley says, "We believe in good doctors." "But when the doctors have done all that they can," its time to let the Lord heal miraculously. Personal observation.

19. Personal observation.

20. Ernest Angley, "The Ernest Angley Hour" television boradcast, WHMB, Indianapolis, 21 Feb. 1988. All references hereafter to Angley's television broadcasts will be referred to as "The Ernest Angley Hour."

21. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 59-61.

22. Randi 239.

23. Ernest Angley, The Power of the Cross (Akron, Ohio: Winston Press, 1987) 17.

24. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 9.

25. Ernest Angley, The Greatness of the Fire of the Holy Spirit (Akron, Ohio: Winston Press, 1987) 25.

26. "The Ernest Angley Hour," 7 Feb. and 21 Feb. 1988.

27. Ernest Angley, "Abide in God's Love," The Power of the Holy Ghost Aug. 1987: 11.

28. Angley, The Greatness of the Fire of the Holy Spirit 16.

29. Ernest Angley, letter to the author, Feb. 1988.

30. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 45. See also Angley, Cell 15, addendum, ii.

31. Ernest Angely, "Preparation," The Power of the Holy Ghost February 1988: 14.

32. Angley, Faith in God Heals the Sick 65.

33. Angley, The Greatness of the Fire of the Holy Spirit 11, 15-16.

34. Angley, "Preparation" 13.

35. "The Ernest Angley Hour," 21 Feb. 1988.

36. Angley, The Greatness of the Fire of the Holy Spirit 2, 18.

37. Angley, "Preparation" 7.

38. Ernest Angley, Untying God's Hands (Akron, Ohio: Winston Press, 1977) 129-30.

39. de Groot G-4.

40. Angley, Untying God's Hands 142

41. de Groot G-4.

42. Angley, Cell 15 27.

43. Angley, Cell 15 40-41

44. Angley, Cell 15 54, 60. See 57 for a full account of what God allegedly said to Angley.

45. Angley, Cell 15 60.

46. Laura Haferd, "The 'Faith-healing' Arrest That Did Wonders," The [Akron] Beacon Journal, 3 April 1987: B4

47. See, for example, "A Beginner's Guide to Television Evangelists," Playboy Oct. 1980: 157-61. Laura Haferd of The [Akron] Beacon Journal suggests, "You can't call him 'the inimitable Ernest Angley' because everywhere you look some comedian or car dealer is doing an imitation of him." See "Pitching and Preaching," The [Akron] Beacon Journal 3 April 1987: B-1.

48. Haferd, "Pitching and Preaching" B-1.

49. Randi 238.

50. Personal observation.

51. Personal observation. In a student critique of Angley for a communication course taught by this writer, Terri Janostak noted, "Throughout his sermon he spoke slowly, smiled a lot and had good eye contact. I thought his intonation was good; he raised his voice when he wanted to make a point, but he didn't get carried away. He used many hand gestures; he pointed whenever he wanted to emphasize a point. He walked from side to side of the podium, trying to reach the entire audience. . . .I thought Referend Angley had a very smooth delivery. He never lost his place or grasped for words throughout his sermon." The

critique was written 9 Dec. 1987 and is in the author's possession.

52. Kimberly Neuendorf and Robert Ableman, "Televangelism: A Look at Communicator Style," Journal of Religious Studies vol. 13, no. 1, 1985: 51-52.

53. Neuendorf and Abelman 47, 56.

54. Carroll C. Arno.d, Criticism of Oral Rhetoric (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1974) 217-18.

55. Randi 238.

56. Rose Blackman in a student critique of Angley written for a communication course taught by this writer, 10 Dec. 1987. Critique is in author's possession.

57. Todd V. Lewis, "Charisma and Media Evangelists: An Explication and Model of Communication Influence" The Southern Communication Journal 54 (Fall, 1988): 103.

58. Personal observation.

59. Angley Cell 15, addendum, xii.

60. Angley, interview with Fred Griffith.

61. Eugene E. White, Basic Public Speaking (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1984) 215.

62. Randi 239.

63. Angley, interview with Fred Griffith.

64. Personal observation.

65. Critique by Terri Janostak, 8 Dec. 1987.

66. White 214.

67. Ernest Angley, letter to the author, 12 Nov. 1987.

68. Martha Templeton, "Free from Alcohol and Drugs," The Power of the Holy Ghost Aug. 1987: 13.

69. "The Ernest Angley Hour," 7 Feb. 1988.

70. Angley, The Power of the Cross 18.

71. Angley, Lukewarm Christians 9, 23.

72. Personal observation.

73. Personal observation.

74. de Groot B-4.

75. Angley, The Power of the Cross 8.

76. Personal observation.

77. "The Ernest Angley Hour," 23 Aug. 1987.

78. "The Ernest Angley Hour," 23 Aug. 1987.

79. "The Ernest Angley Hour," 23 Aug. 1987.

80. Angley, Cell 15 57.

81. Angley, Untying God's Hands 65. In a personal interview with Fred Griffith, Angley states, "I wasn't born in wealth. But we had a lot of love. And I never associated money

and happiness together. We had a lot of happiness, a lot of love, but very little money."

82. See David Edwin Harrell, Jr. Oral Roberts: An American Life (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1985).

83. Personal observation.